

Suggested Talking Points
Oliver Agoncillo
USAID Natural Resources Policy Advisor
Launch of the Davao Gulf Biodiversity Conservation
Advocacy
and Fund Raising Campaign
Sultan Hall, The Royal Mandaya Hotel, Davao City
August 21, 2010, 6:00 – 7:00 P.M.

- ***Maayong Gabi-i sa inyong tanan! Great to be here!***

(EcoGov to provide local VIP list)

- **Commend the concerted effort to save critical biodiversity in the country: Davao Gulf.** With the inspired strong commitment of the different Chambers and their partners in the region, USAID commends another milestone in the concerted effort of the various stakeholders in the Davao Gulf region to conserve and sustainably manage your unique marine resources. This launch draws attention to conserve a critical biodiversity area of national importance that supports more than 4 million people in this region, produce among the highest aquaculture production in the country, which generates an annual estimated Php 669 million (USD 14.4 million) in earnings and provides employment to nearly 19,000 commercial and municipal fisherfolk.

In addition, the Davao Gulf sustains the region's Php 6.5 billion (USD 140 million) ecotourism industry and around Php 16 billion (USD 344 million) sea transport industry.

- **First major activity of inter-Davao Chambers towards Gulf conservation: Public-Private Partnership in action.** I understand that this campaign is the first major activity of the Federation of Davao Chambers of Commerce, led by the Davao

City Chamber of Commerce and Industry, along with Samal Island, Panabo, Sta Cruz, Tagum and Mati - that will benefit various conservation efforts Gulf-wide.

The campaign clearly demonstrates an innovative public-private partnership that serves as a model to engage the private sector, civil society and the local governments towards improved environmental governance. We are witnessing here the private sector actively engaging in conservation work as part of its social responsibility. In turn, improved public-private sector governance will create investment opportunities and will eventually lead to tangible financial, social and environmental benefits.

- **USAID support in biodiversity conservation through PPP.** USAID is proud of this public-private partnership model in biodiversity conservation that we and the DENR have been supporting in key biodiversity areas in the country for almost seven years now through the Philippine Environmental Governance Project, often referred to as “EcoGov.” This project has been working in the region since 2005, starting with the Davao City Local Government. The Davao Gulf region is among the exemplary areas, and your concerted efforts here highlight progress in addressing threats to biodiversity using an integrated ecosystem management framework – also called a “ridge to reef” approach. We are now starting to see that co-benefits are achieved by way of addressing threats from the ridge to the reef.
- **Coin bank symbolisms.** I note that an important element of the over-all Davao Gulf advocacy campaign concerns financial sustainability. In this connection, the distribution of the coin banks to the establishments of the Chambers’ member-companies will be among the many fund-raising initiatives planned throughout the year. And instead of using tin cans,

which have been commonly used by other organizations, this coin bank campaign will actually re-use plastic water bottles. Again, I commend this application of powerful symbolisms to the public. First, people will easily see how many coins have been collected in each bottled water coin bank, and hopefully, they will be encouraged to contribute more. **Transparency** is also symbolized in terms of the organizers' commitment in the collection of the funds generated. Second, the funds will be used to support various conservation activities in the Gulf through participatory processes. Finally, it emphasizes the idea of “re-using” and “recycling” items to help reduce waste generation.

- With such a clever and innovative strategy, I strongly feel that all the necessary ingredients are here that will make this advocacy campaign stand out, generate heightened awareness and public support!
- **USG's Continued Commitment:** In closing, I sincerely say, congratulations to all Davaoeños for this launch, timely as it is as you celebrate Kadayawan—a thanksgiving! The American people join hands with you and will continue to support you in this endeavor of conserving Davao Gulf. Your leadership is a wonderful example for others to follow, and the U.S. Government is proud to be your partner in this work.
- Congratulations and ***daghang salamat sa tanan!*** (many thanks to all of you!)